

Police; U.S. Conference of Mayors; Presbyterian Church; Episcopal Church; and the Parent's Network on Disabilities.

Poll after poll continues to show that the American public supports hate crimes legislation, including legislation inclusive of sexual orientation. A new Kaiser Family Foundation poll released last month shows that 73 percent of Americans support hate crime legislation that includes sexual orientation.

Passage of a comprehensive law banning hate violence is long overdue. It is a federal crime to hijack an automobile or to possess cocaine, and it ought to be a federal crime to drag a man to death because of his race or to hang a man because of his sexual orientation. These are crimes that shock and shame our national conscience and they should be subject to federal law enforcement assistance and prosecution.

THE LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge the House to pass H.R. 1343, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Passage of hate crimes legislation is long overdue.

As the House of Representatives fails to act, the list of victims of hate crimes grows every day. One such victim was murdered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, last month on November 11. Juana Vega was shot repeatedly by her girlfriend's brother outside her girlfriend's family home. According to friends of the victim, the suspect made repeated threats, explicitly stating that he would kill the victim because of her sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this tragic situation repeats itself far too often in our country. We must act to address it now. It is unfortunate that hate crimes occur, but they do. It is irresponsible to deny that there are individuals who seek to commit violence against an individual because they may be gay, lesbian, a woman, or disabled, the people that we seek to protect with the passage of this legislation.

It has been argued that we cannot see into a criminal's heart or mind, that we cannot determine their motive and intent, and therefore, cannot dole out appropriate justice. Yet, the most ancient concepts of justice still with us today consider the intent of those perpetrating a crime. Should we not consider the intent of a man or woman who kills or maims because of their hatred of an entire group, class, or race of people?

A Member of the other body, the former chairman of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, said last year, "A crime committed not just to harm an individual but out of the motive of sending a message of hatred to an entire community is appropriately punished more harshly or in a different manner than other crimes."

Hate crimes are different than other violent crimes because they seek to in-

still fear in an entire community, be it burning a cross in someone's yard, the burning of a synagogue, or a rash of beatings of people in proximity to gay-identified establishments. This sort of domestic terrorism demands a strong Federal response because this country was founded on the premise that persons should be free to be who they are without the fear of violence.

Mr. Speaker, this House needs to pass the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act as expeditiously as possible. We need to do everything that we can to prevent hate crimes like the murder of Juana Vega.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR PASSAGE OF MEANINGFUL HATE CRIMES PREVENTION LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA), the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LOUIS), the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN), and others here today to express my strong support for the passage of meaningful hate crimes prevention legislation, and in particular, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001, which I am proud to be a cosponsor of.

During these difficult times, it is critical that we stand together as one people united against a common enemy. In the past months we have witnessed the worst of humanity. On September 11, over 3,500 of our fellow human beings were murdered by extremists whose sole motivation was a pure hatred of America and the freedom and diversity that define our Nation. We must combat this horrible act by holding those responsible to account, and we must combat this horrible act by sending a powerful and clear message to the world that we are a Nation that values tolerance, acceptance, understanding; and we are a Nation that celebrates our diversity.

At no time in the great history of this Nation has it been more important for us to take a stand against hatred, scapegoating, and prejudice that can affect and destroy a society. Never has it been more important for us to reach out to our friends and neighbors of Arabic descent or of the Islamic faith, demonstrating how much we value them as members of our community.

Nothing would aggravate and undermine the forces that committed the horrible atrocities of September 11 more than redoubling our efforts to protect and respect and uphold the rights of all.

Mr. Speaker, since September 11, hate crimes against Muslim and Arab Americans and immigrants have increased all over the country. From small towns to large cities, we have

seen incidents of physical and verbal abuse. More than 1,200 cases of hate-motivated attacks or assault against members of the Muslim and Arab communities have been documented in just 3 months.

As Members of Congress, we must act now to reassure our American Muslim and Arabic communities that they and their families are safe and welcome and we value their presence in our country.

America has always been a Nation of tremendous diversity. As our men and women in uniform risk their lives to protect our way of life, nothing could send them a stronger message of support than an America that finds strength in the differences in heritage and beliefs that make us uniquely American. Bias, bigotry, scapegoating, prejudice, discrimination, and hateful persecution have no place in American society. It is time we solidified such a position with the full force of the law.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, and I quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Mr. Speaker, as we fight to bring those who have attacked us to justice, we must not overlook the injustices that are still present in our own society. Hate crimes are serious and well-documented problems, yet they remain inadequately recognized. The current Federal hate crimes statute is limited to crimes motivated by discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, or national origin. Unfortunately, hate crimes committed in this country are broader than that. Current law excludes other communities of individuals who are victimized just as often for other reasons.

The importance of congressional action on this crucial issue cannot be overemphasized. Unlike other crimes, hate-motivated crimes not only affect individuals or families, they permanently scar entire communities. Only by recognizing and combatting these crimes can we all begin to eradicate the bias and bigotry that remains all too prevalent in today's society.

We must work to rid our schools and our neighborhoods and our communities of hatred. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to each other, and we owe it to our children who look to us for guidance.

The time has come to break down the walls of ignorance once and for all and replace them with communities built on tolerance, justice, and compassion. The perpetrators of hate crimes are not the only guilty parties. Silence, complacency, and indifference in the face of such brutal attacks are allies, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join in the fight for a Nation united against the evils of bigotry and hate directed against anyone in our society. Let us bring this legislation to the floor that has been championed by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) so valiantly over the years. Let us pass it through this House, and let us send a message to the rest of the